

Reviewing COPSC: Building on the Lessons of Community Portals

Report by *Invenire*

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Oakville, March 23-24, 2006

Overview

- Purpose of Review
- Part I – Program Evaluation
- Part II – Building on the COPSC Experience
- Part III – Recommendations & Action Plan

Purpose of the Review

- Evaluate provincial investment
- Outline possible new strategic directions (technology based)
 - Fostering greater ICT use by SMEs
 - Enhancing local economic development
 - Furthering broader provincial goals (better service delivery & reducing costs)

COPSC Program Goals

- Foster adoption & use of Internet technologies
- Improve on-line delivery of community-based information and services
- Promote local economic development

Methodology

- Quantitative data (limited) & qualitative data significant - 100 interviews & over 300 pgs of case material)
 - program evaluation & looking ahead
- Program evaluation
 - 5 criteria- effectiveness, efficiency, outputs/outcomes, sustainability, governance
 - 8 areas of interest - municipal, SMEs, economic development, tourism, service delivery, technology, provincial relationship
- Lessons learned
 - Challenges, product & process innovations, and local perspectives on ICT use by SMEs, economic development and public sector service delivery

Informant Profile

- Interviewees were community partners identified by project teams who implemented COPSC, including:
 - Project managers
 - Municipal CAOs, IT directors, librarians, economic development & tourism officers
 - Community & human services providers
 - Educators
 - Small business owners, Community Futures and Chamber reps.
 - Academics
- COPSC Program staff
- Did not interview vendors

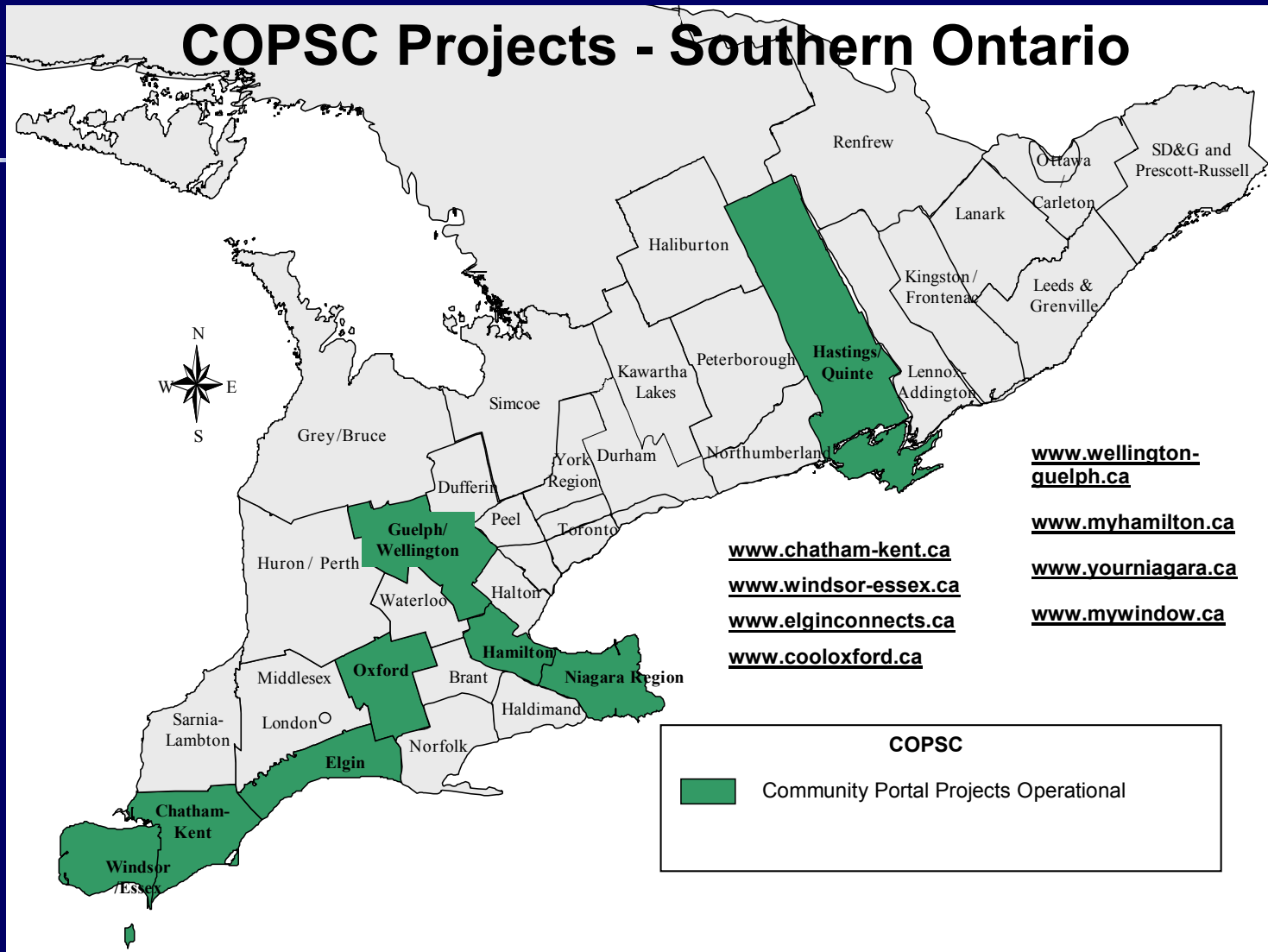
Part I

Program Evaluation

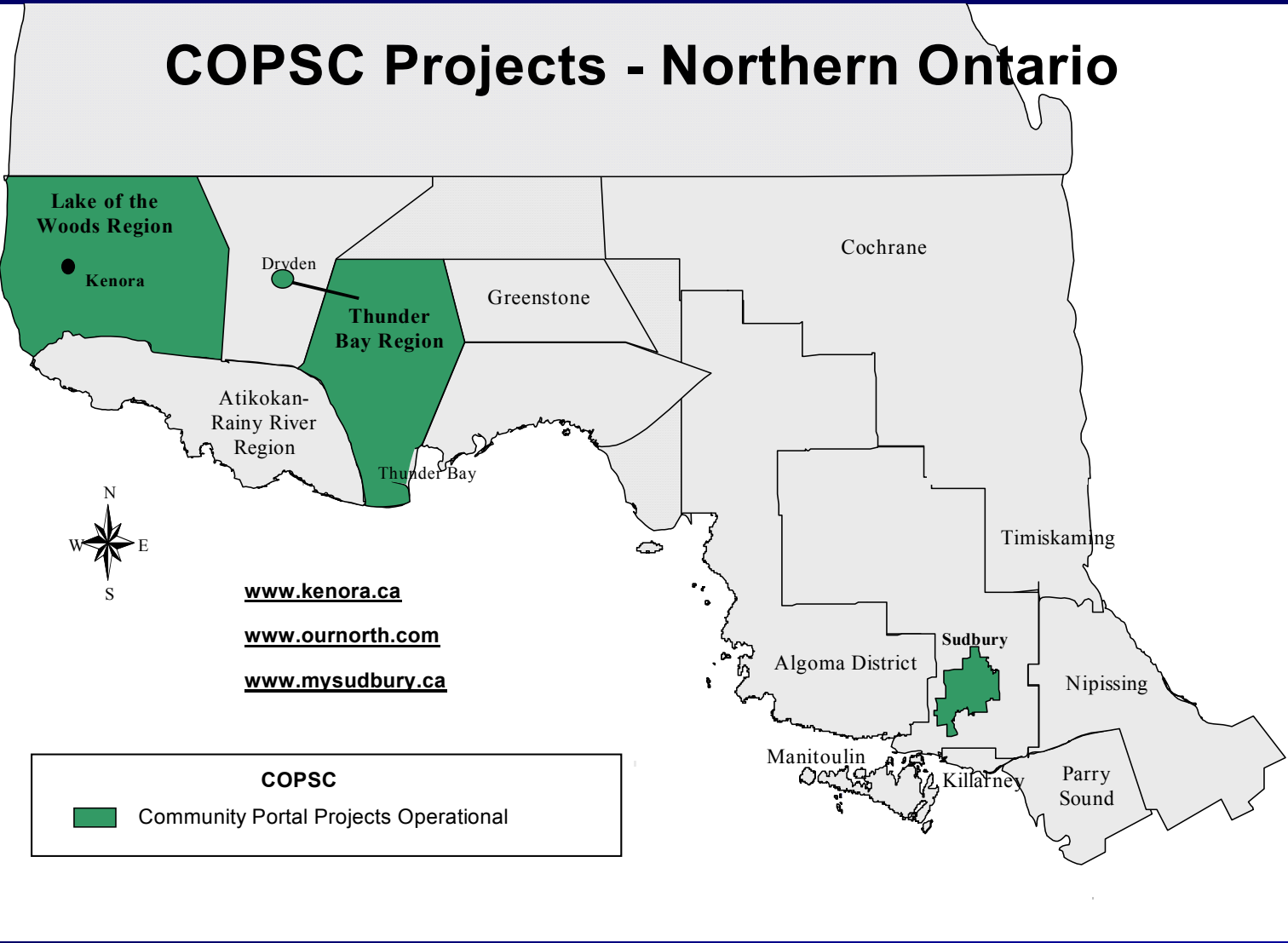
General results

- Portal projects very good, well received
- Program effective & outcomes positive
- Projects demonstrated efficiency
 - Leverage range (2-4 times provincial investment)
- Vast majority show good or excellent sustainability prospects
- Community partnerships stable throughout
 - 1 now questionable
- MEDT seen as crucial
 - As catalyst, \$ support, help, for information exchange

COPSC Projects - Southern Ontario



COPSC Projects - Northern Ontario



Observations

- Each community was different (Table 1 in Exec. Sum.)
- Bottom-up approach proved very successful
- Effective community partnerships needed:
 - Significant information flow & transparency
 - A lot of vertical and horizontal learning
 - Clear incentives & guidelines
 - More interaction w/ Province
 - True 2-way partnership
 - Recognition
- Drifts in portal concept
 - From web presence to regional information system
 - From interaction space to secure space

'Good' Practices

- Technology
 - Windsor (PKI) / Sudbury (MS Share point)
- Sustainability
 - Hamilton /Elgin (municipal integration)
- Adoption-Marketing
 - Oxford (education) / Hamilton (critical mass/ volume)
- Governance-Collaboration
 - Elgin (community consultation) / Windsor (WEDnet)
- Community Engagement
 - Sudbury (leadership of human service sector)
- Innovation
 - Oxford (EMS management) / Chatham (10 new services)

Product Innovations

- Health service innovations:
 - PARS, disease tracking, patient transport, EMS management, physician recruitment
- PKI intranet platform for community portal
- Combination of local data & Seniors' Portal
- Extension of CLASS software for community e-commerce

Process Innovations

- Windsor's product discounts for management buy-in
- Oxford's linking of 'map-your-farm' to nutrient management program
- Niagara /HQnet's distributed development process
- Windsor's MUSH sector governance

Success Factors

- Geographic
 - Importance of population density (networks) and remoteness
- Partnership (contingent cooperation)
 - Importance of local champions
 - Importance of local governance regime
 - Importance of relations between sectors (social sustainability)

Lessons learned

- Importance of bottom-up approach
- COPSC shows potential leverage for portals to:
 - Further community growth, and
 - Advance three streams of activity
 - more ICT use by SMEs
 - local economic development,
 - modernize public service delivery across Ontario
- Regional portals make better vehicles in some places than others
- Interventions should be tailored locally
- Program planning & delivery improvements are possible

Impacts

(longer term changes to knowledge or practice)

- COPSC contributed to development of regional perspectives among local players (eg. Elgin, Windsor-Essex, Northern Genesis)
- Portals helped to change regional image (eg. Chatham-Kent, Sudbury & Oxford)
- Improved the effectiveness in the delivery of the public services – improved choice, convenience & quality of service. Led to user savings.
- Community information becoming seen as a regional asset and responsibility (eg. Oxford)

Impact of ICTs on SMEs

- Impacts limited by emphasis of COPSC program
- Feedback limited by nature of interviewees
- However,
 - More education is needed to link benefits to SME needs
 - The right 'hook' is needed (eg. 'Map your farm')
 - More understanding needed of direct & immediate benefits of ICT to SMEs
 - Model users need to be identified

Conclusions Looking Back

- Investment was worthwhile
- Lessons of COPSC can be carried forward
 - Fostering greater ICT use by SMEs
 - how to foster but not what to foster
 - Enhancing local economic development
 - catalyzed regional viewpoints & relationships (eg. Toyota)
 - link between economic development and the online promotion of the community and its quality of life
 - Better service delivery & reducing service costs
 - improved choice, convenience & quality of service
 - reduction of service costs

Part II

Building on the COPSC Experience

Changes since 2000

- Technology has changed
 - Technology with a purpose
 - More sophisticated, cheaper, easier to use
 - More broadband connectivity everywhere
- Community technology needs have changed
 - SME awareness & education a big issue (general and broadband)
 - Connectivity still problematic in pockets
 - Accessibility for disabled and illiterate now on radar
- More service delivery modernization
 - Front office/back office interface an issue

Provincial role has changed

- More knowledge broker
 - Both to and from communities
- More partnership facilitator
 - Amongst communities
 - Within a community
 - Between community & experts (hardware, software, management)
- More front office/back office interface smoother
- Less funder of technology and applications

Leveraging Ontario Portals (COPSC or not)

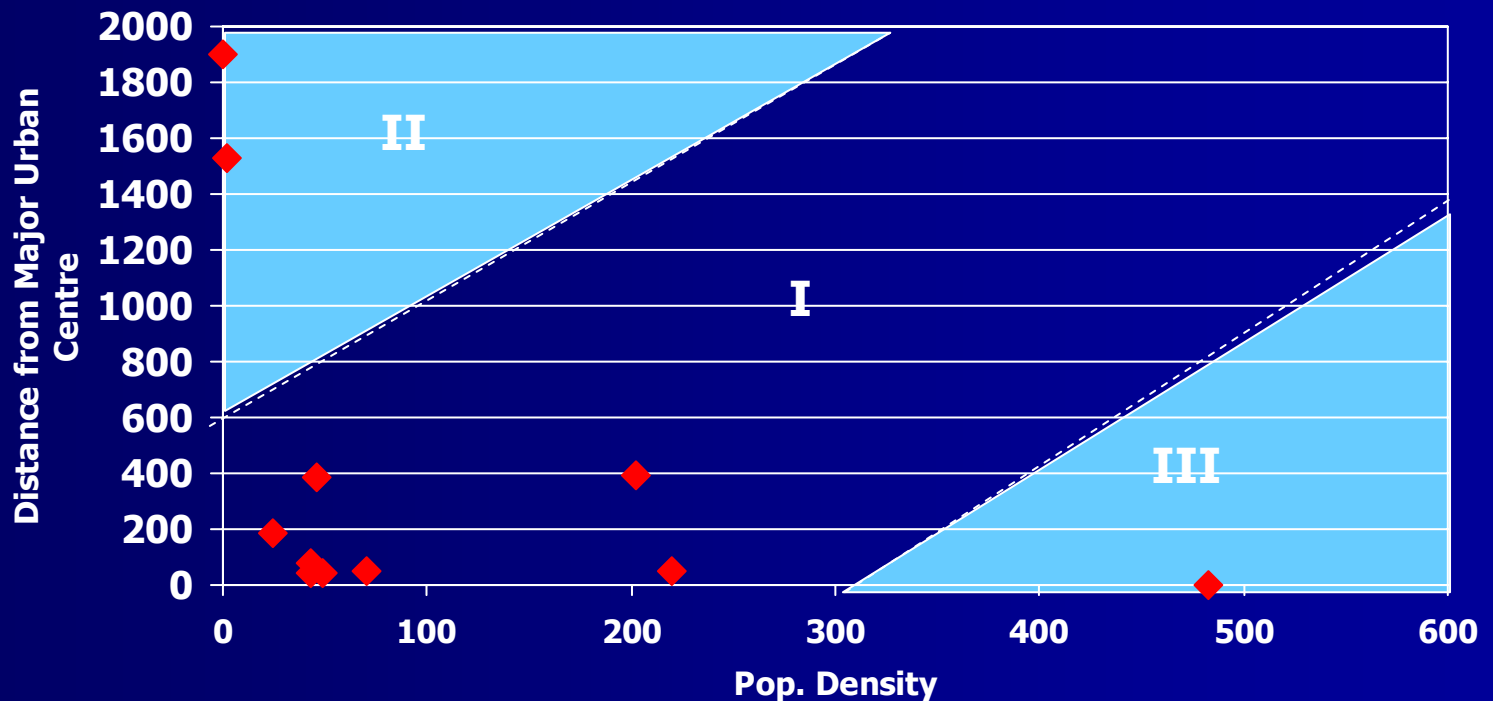
- About 50 Ontario regions among which COPSC invested in 11
- Others have some form of portal ranging from sets of individual community websites (eg. Timmins municipal site & Chamber of Commerce) to sophisticated transactional portals (eg. Mississauga)
- Not all are regional portals

Framework to Build on Regional Portals

- Three zones
 - Population density & remoteness
 - Focus on first two for success
- Vary approach for each community
 - zones, local intelligence, springboard, enabling/'kick starting'
- Balance perspectives
- New strategic directions for Province

Portal Zones & COPSC Projects

Remoteness vs Pop. Density



Three Zones

- Zone I – middle density, not too remote
 - regional portals can play dominant role
- Zone II – low density &/or remote
 - partnerships needed for effective portal
 - Stand alone (eg. City of Thunder Bay)
 - Network (eg. KNet)
 - Hybrid (eg. Manitoulin Island & Sudbury)
- Zone III – high density &/or mega city & shadow
 - no dominant portal possible too many alternatives available

Vary Approach

- Zones
- Community intelligence
- Community springboard strength
- Enabling approach
 - use 'kick start' only if needed

Balancing perspectives

- Provincial-community perspective
 - Legitimately different
 - Require harmonization
 - Mutual acceptance

New strategic directions for Province

- Helping communities
- Broader provincial agenda
- Generalizing COPSC lessons

Helping communities

- Some too small to be completely 'self-sufficient' (Zone II, parts of Zone I)
 - knowledge broker
 - partnership facilitator
 - funder if necessary
- May need help with portal maturity to improve effectiveness for SMEs
 - Evolving match of range, sophistication (learning loops)
 - Smooth front office-back office interface if priority
- May need help to ensure adequate level of SME education/awareness (general and broadband)

Broader provincial agenda

- Smooth front office-back office link in community portal* can modernize service delivery and reduce costs in Zones I & II
 - Ministries can 'graze' instead of duplicating effort
 - Building new channels can be avoided
 - Can provide locals with primary access for:
 - provincial products & services
 - two way communication with government portals (e.g. seniors)

* Stand alone, hybrid, network using an effective portal

Generalizing COPSC Lessons

- Provincial-community relationships
 - Need to be functionally integrated, balanced (top down/bottom up), & nurtured (exchanges & forums)
- Horizontal (cross-ministry) relationships
 - More forums to harmonize activities that impact communities
- Paying attention to needs of 'contingent cooperators'
 - Sustain commitment by keeping partners informed (formally & informally)
 - Identify & support champions (partnership linchpins)
 - Encourage monitoring / evaluation
 - Help identify & integrate learning loops
 - Partnership arrangements

Part III

Recommendations & Action Plan

Recommendations & Action Plan

1. Help communities (interested but unable) in Zone I and II to assist SMEs
 - partnership combinations (stand alone, networks, hybrids, etc.) for effective portals
 - broadband community connectivity in pockets
 - education/awareness (tools, templates, \$)
2. Facilitate technology knowledge exchange
 - community portals (e.g. focal point, meeting place / market place, COPSC data base)
 - promoting community level product & process improvements (including other ministries)

Recommendations & Action Plan (cont'd)

3. Champion new opportunities for leveraging community portals (including with other relevant ministries)
 - Portal as a tool for emergency preparedness
 - Several health related innovations
 - Community pilots (eg. front office-back office interface)
 - Investigate other tools
 - Workable approaches for rural areas of Zone I
 - Workable approaches for Zone III

Recommendations & Action Plan (cont'd)

4. Act as knowledge broker of new technology/ applications & help exploit community innovation
 - trends & issues (eg. IPV6)
 - pass new technology to communities (eg. 'portlet' applications)
 - pass on communities innovation that could be used elsewhere (eg. PKI)
5. Investigate value of other ICT tools for SMEs
 - broadband
 - online marketing
 - secure spaces

Recommendations & Action Plan (cont'd)

6. Improve horizontal coordination among provincial ministries for activities aimed at the communities
7. Enhance local intelligence gathering & inter-ministry coordination and dissemination of it
 - Partner with Small Business Enterprise Centres to gather & provide intelligence to MEDT/MGS
 - make available across OPS as needed

Looking Forward

Conclusions

- Need for differentiated approaches for different Ontario communities
- Need for effective distributed governance for success at a community level (across community; community to Province; and across OPS)
- Need to pay attention to requirements of contingent cooperators

Thank You

